

Living With Amputation

No. 3

A Publication for Adult Amputees by the National Amputee Centre



Photos: Darren Stone, Victoria Times Colonist

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Living With
Amputation No. 3

Publisher:

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Living With Amputation is published by The War Amputations of Canada. Views expressed in *Living With Amputation* are those of the contributing writers and not necessarily those of the Association. "The War Amps is a registered charitable organization operated under the direction of **war amputees.**" Charitable Registration Number 13196 9628 RR0001. ISSN 1708-5659.

Please direct all correspondence concerning *Living With Amputation* to the National Amputee Centre.

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ON THE COVER...

To maintain her active lifestyle Lauren's daily routine includes taking care of herself as an amputee. Lauren likes to bike and downhill ski so it is very important that her residual limbs are in tiptop shape.



SENIORS IN ACTION!

Combining realistic goals and motivation will help you on your road to recovery.

As a senior amputee, you have different needs than the general population. If your amputation was a while ago, you have already adapted to being an amputee, but may be finding that the combination of your amputation and age makes certain things, like mobility, increasingly difficult. Later in this article, we highlight some new improvements in artificial limbs and various aids that can help you.

If you are a new amputee, you may feel overwhelmed by the recent changes in your life. An amputation is a loss of a body part, and it takes time to adapt to this change physically and emotionally. Combining realistic goals and motivation will help you on your road to recovery. At the beginning, your amputation may be a central focus in your life due to the healing time, rehabilitation and prosthetic appointments involved. However, with time it will become less central and you will resume many of the activities you enjoyed before, or start some new ones.

If you are currently going through the rehabilitation process, it is important to ask your clinic team any questions you have when you meet with them, to make the most of your physiotherapy and/or occupational therapy sessions and during appointments with your prosthetist. Family and friends are a great source of support during your

recovery process, and can probably assist you with mobility and around the house. Getting up and moving around as early as your clinic team recommends will help keep your

When it comes to keeping active and remaining independent, amputees learn along the way that they need to use a variety of products and techniques to accomplish daily tasks.

joints from getting stiff and keep your energy levels up. During your rehabilitation and even after you've completed it, your mobility will increase and you will learn ways to do more things on your own.

When it comes to keeping active and remaining independent, amputees learn along the way that they need to use a *variety* of products and techniques to accomplish daily tasks. Using a combination of products and adaptations can make life easier. We will touch on some in this article and highlight how a combination of these allow amputees to meet their needs.

Artificial Limbs

Seniors make up the largest percentage of amputees, and many products are designed with your specific needs in mind. Your prosthetist and clinic team will help you to determine the best options to meet your day-to-day needs. These will depend on a number of factors – the level of your amputation, the number of amputations you have, as well as other health conditions you have.

While prostheses (artificial limbs) do provide function, they can never replace the function of natural limbs and amputees also use more energy to operate them. An above-knee amputee, for example, uses up to



70% more oxygen than someone without an amputation just to walk on level ground. Dealing with cardiovascular disease, diabetes, or another medical condition is another important factor that your clinic team will consider when deciding if being fitted with an artificial limb is possible. If you are a multiple amputee or have a high level amputation (e.g. hip disarticulation), the best solution for you may be to use mobility aids regularly rather than, or in addition to, artificial limbs.

If you are fitted with an artificial limb, your prosthetist will determine what type is best based on your activity level (not age!), health concerns, and how important the look and function of the artificial limb is. Tell your prosthetist what a 'typical week' is for you and what activities (like golfing, gardening or playing with your grandchildren) you enjoy, so he or she can make the right choice. Amputees often think that the 'best' artificial limb for them is the most technically advanced one. That is not always the case when all of the factors are taken into consideration.

The weight of the prosthesis is a concern for seniors. A lightweight prosthesis may be easier to move, making walking less tiring for example. Extra components, like knee rotators or shock absorbers – while offering more natural movement – will also increase the weight of the prosthesis. Maintaining stability on the prosthesis is another key concern, and it is also important that the prosthesis is easy to put on and take off. Above all, the prosthesis needs to be comfortable to wear, or you won't wear it regularly.

Lower-limb Amputees

There are a wide variety of artificial limbs available to suit the needs of amputees with different activity levels. Both low and high activity level components have advantages and disadvantages. Low-activity feet and knees are typically simple and inexpensive. These are a good choice if you are walking within your own house and short distances. On the other hand, high-activity feet and knees 'keep up' better if you are very active and allow for you to change walking speeds.

Tell your prosthetist what a 'typical week' is for you and what activities you enjoy, so he or she can make the right choice.

When it comes to feet, low-activity ones (like single-axis feet) are quite stable. However, the multi-axis foot conforms better on uneven surfaces and the added ankle motion helps to absorb some of the stresses of walking. Most feet now have a degree of energy storage (also called 'energy return') – this important



Medium energy-storing foot

feature stores and then releases energy as you walk, making it easier for you to walk without tiring.

With knees, stability is a concern for some senior amputees. Stance control knees, often called 'safety knees,' are popular because they contain a weight-activated friction brake that stops the knee from bending when you are taking a step, so the knee will not collapse when you have your weight on it. If stability is really an issue, then locking knees may be a good option. However, high-activity knees have features (air, fluid, or a microcomputer) that help make the knee movement easier – which is very helpful if you walk at various speeds.

Upper-limb Amputees

Upper-limb prostheses help with daily living activities. There are three main types of upper-limb prostheses: cosmetic, body-powered (also called cable-operated) and electric (usually myoelectric). Some above-elbow amputees choose not to wear a prosthesis due to the weight involved, instead choosing daily living aids for household activities.

Cosmetic (passive) arms are a good choice if you want to wear an arm for appearance, but are not looking for a lot of function. Many cosmetic arms come in different skin colours for a natural appearance, and some come with bendable fingers and can hold an object when positioned with your sound hand.

Body-powered arms that operate with a shoulder harness are fairly simple to use, and have a fast reaction speed. For the hand function, the harness can be attached to a hook

or a realistic-looking hand. One of the disadvantages to a body-operated arm is that the harness can be uncomfortable to wear. Alternatively, myoelectric arms look natural and have good function. New lithium batteries are lighter weight and last longer than nickel-cadmium batteries, the only option previously available. Myoelectric arms, however, are heavier and more expensive than body-powered arms.

Arm amputees often have special devices (either commercially-available ones or custom-made by their prosthetist) so they can enjoy their favourite recreational activities, like playing pool, golf or enjoying water fitness, to name just a few.

Liners and Socks Help Out

Liners and socks can help keep your artificial limb snugly and securely in place (suspension), reduce perspiration problems, and provide cushioning. While traditional liners and socks offer some cushioning to make artificial limbs more comfortable, there are new materials available (like silicone) that can provide a thick layer of cushioning between the prosthesis and residual limb. This may be very useful for seniors who often have sensitive skin – as these types of liners help protect against sores caused by friction.

Aids for Mobility

Mobility aids can also be beneficial for amputees. They obviously help with mobility, but also



Folding canes (like the Dimalo one here) are a great help when you are travelling.

with stability and balance. Mobility aids range from canes to walkers, to scooters and wheelchairs. We have covered various examples of these in issue no. 1 of *Living With Amputation*, so we will highlight only a few here that may be especially beneficial for seniors.

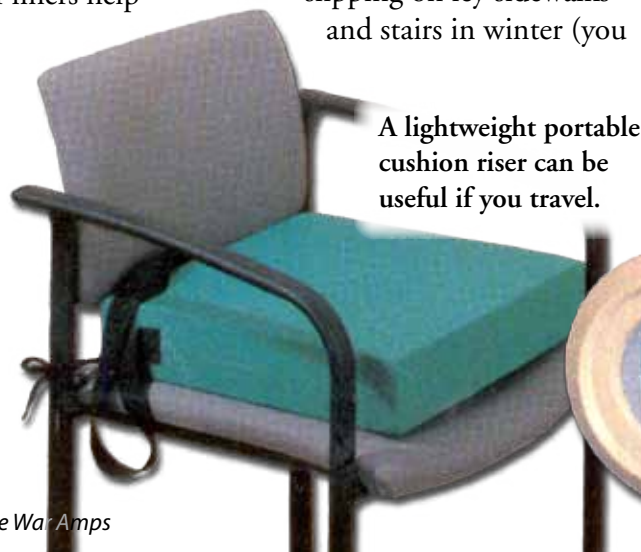
Canes and crutches come in many varieties these days, and an ergonomic and lightweight one is a good choice. Folding canes and telescoping crutches are a great option when travelling, since you can stow them easily on a bus or plane. Walking in the rain or during the winter can be a concern for amputees. Canes with retractable spikes can reduce your chances of slipping on icy sidewalks and stairs in winter (you

can flip the spike up when walking indoors). Putting on a pair of cleats over your shoes can also help with stability in rainy or snowy weather.

Aids for Daily Living

Daily living aids are great for helping you with common activities in the house. Both arm and leg amputees can benefit from daily living aids. For arm amputees or if you have arthritis or general strain from overuse of your sound hand, door knob turners and tap turners can be attached permanently to a door knob or tap to make them easier to turn. For leg amputees, a stool in the kitchen can help take pressure off your artificial leg because you can sit while cooking, or even preparing food.

Daily living aids also offer a safe and convenient way to do things. To get something out of reach, a reacher (a long grabbing device) may be a better option than trying to reach for something by standing on a stepping stool. You can also use a reacher to get something that has fallen on the floor without having to bend down. To help with getting up from bed, bedrails and clamp-on rails are a good solution. Bed/chair risers (plastic risers that fit under the bed or chair legs) are a simple way to add a couple of inches to your bed or chair and make sitting and getting up easier.



A lightweight portable cushion riser can be useful if you travel.



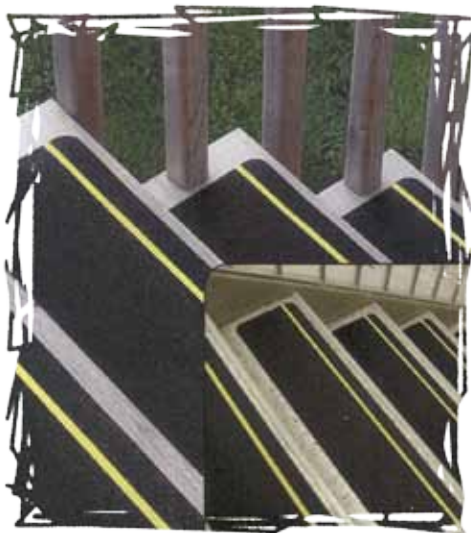
A variety of door knob turners are available. This one glows in the dark.

Let's not forget that amputees also learn to manage certain tasks in their own way, without the use of any special devices at all – like using their chin to hold things. Of course, it is natural for amputees to use their bodies differently to accomplish tasks, but this is not always possible or even advisable. You do not want to put more strain on your sound limbs, so keeping all these different aids in mind is a good idea.

Household Adjustments

We spend a lot of time in our own homes, and we want them to be a place where we feel comfortable, relaxed and safe. However, your home may not be well designed to meet your needs as an amputee. Simple adaptations or tools can help make your home safer and easier to get around in.

If you keep doing some daily chores and activities the same way, even when they become difficult, you



A non-slip tread on your stairs can stop you from slipping.

may end up straining yourself. Try to be aware of this to reduce the risk of injuring yourself at home. Ask yourself “What is very difficult for me to do?” or “What can't I do anymore?,” and then think about solutions. There are many simple ways to make that task easier or safer. Sometimes all that needs to be done is to rearrange things, like moving washing and drying machines up to the main floor if going downstairs to the basement to do laundry is too difficult. If you use a wheelchair, removing a door in a common walking area can help. Or instead, by installing swing-clear hinges to the doorframe, you can widen the doorframe by two inches – this is a much easier alternative than having the doorway remodelled.

When it comes to safety in the home, falls are one of the major causes of injury, especially for seniors. A fall can give you a scare, or it can even injure your hip or leg and further affect your mobility. This is a concern for all amputees, but especially if you are a leg amputee. Make sure that you have a clear walking path and that furniture is not in the way of common walking areas. This includes bundling all cords for television, lamps, etc. to ensure you cannot trip on them. Also, tack rugs and glue vinyl flooring so they lie flat. Non-slip mats in the hallways and under rugs (to secure the rug to the floor) can help prevent you from slipping too.

Stairs are a particular area to pay attention to. A reflective tread can make steps more visible – one type has a non-slip, highly visible reflective strip that can be added to the edge of each step. It is important to have railings on

all stairs and steps (both inside and outside your home) as well as light switches at both ends of the stairs.

Seek help for tasks in and around the home that you find difficult or that are dangerous (like changing a ceiling light or snow removal). Getting outside assistance for services like laundry, house cleaning, home maintenance or cooking will reduce your chances of injuring yourself – and will help you remain healthy and independent.

Exercise

Exercise can help you maintain strength and endurance. This in turn helps you to stay active – you will be able to use your prosthesis effectively and keep the rest of your body in shape, which does extra work to compensate for your missing limb(s). Actually, studies show that doing low-intensity exercise regularly has similar benefits to high-intensity training! Before getting started, speak to your doctor to make sure that you are doing exercises suitable for you, especially if you have high blood pressure, a heart or vascular



This pool cue holder from TRS Inc. was further adapted by adding an insert around the inside of the ring to more snugly hold the cue.



This War Amps member says lawn bowling “benefits me physically because I get exercise through bending, stretching and walking... There’s really no problem participating, even with a disability.”

condition, or diabetes.

Exercise does not need to be time-consuming. Several minutes of stretching every day can help keep you limber. Simple chair exercises can be done right in the comfort of your home (you can start off by doing a few repetitions, and gradually increase the number as you feel comfortable, even adding resistance bands or weights for added strength-training if desired). Walking is a great, low-impact activity – and finding a partner to walk with is a good way to keep your motivation up.

There are also many options at recreation centres. Exercising in warm water can be enjoyed by people of all ages since the water is gentle on joints (especially helpful if you have arthritis). Water exercise increases circulation, relaxes your muscles and reduces edema (swelling). Exercises like yoga and tai chi combine light stretching with soft, slow movements that can improve your fitness level with little risk of injury. The benefits

include improvements in balance, posture, circulation, and vitality.

We have shared just a few examples of activities that can maintain your strength and endurance, but there are many more activities to choose from. Of course, recreational activities like golf and gardening are beneficial too. Learning a new hobby, or restarting one that you did not have as much time for in the past, will also keep you in good spirits, which can benefit your health. The important thing is to enjoy what you are doing and remain active!

Attitude Counts

In this article, we have outlined a number of ways senior amputees can remain mobile and active. From artificial limbs to mobility aids and daily living aids, there are many devices that can help. Modifying your house and following safety tips can prevent falls and injuries. And exercising can improve your strength and endurance, and your overall feeling of well-being! Above all, a positive attitude can really improve your health, overall energy level, and how you see life ahead.

Resources

Seniors Canada On-line seniors.gc.ca

The government of Canada’s Seniors Canada On-line website provides information and links that are relevant to seniors 55 plus, their families, caregivers and supporting service organizations.

1 800 O-Canada (1 800 622-6232), TTY/TDD 1 800 465-7735

Customer Service agents can search their database for information on government programs and publications (available free of charge) designed for seniors – including ones on assistive devices, falls prevention, and healthy living.

Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC)

1 800 668-2642

CMHC has publications available for seniors, such as information on falls prevention and home adaptations, as well as financial programs for seniors making home adaptations.

Many general household stores are starting to carry the types of products mentioned in this article. Home health care specialty stores across the country, like MEDiChair, Sammons Preston Rolyan, Shoppers Home Health Care and Harding Medical Supplies have a wide range of products. Please contact us at the National Amputee Centre, **1 877 622-2472**, if you have any questions, or would like further information on how to remain active. ■

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure...

As an amputee you will likely experience at some point an irritation or some kind of skin disorder on the area of your residual limb enclosed within your socket. Sometimes these skin conditions can be so severe as to prevent you from wearing your artificial limb because of pain and discomfort. In issue no. 2 of *Living With Amputation*, we covered how to keep the residual limb clean and healthy to prevent skin problems; in this article we will help you identify skin problems, mention products that are available to treat them, and describe common types of skin disorders.

Your activity level, age, and the cause of your amputation may affect what type of skin problems you will be prone to. For instance, if your amputation was the result of an accident and there is scarring, you will probably be concerned with abrasions and sores. If you are an above-knee amputee, you must consider that you will use more energy to walk and perspiration may be your biggest concern. For those with a vascular- or diabetes-related amputation, you may have lost sensation in your residual limb(s) and/or sound foot so you won't feel pain from any sores, red areas, or blisters that could be developing – therefore, you will need to check them every day.

Skin disorders should be dealt with immediately, otherwise they may lead to more serious conditions. If you have a persistent skin disorder you should

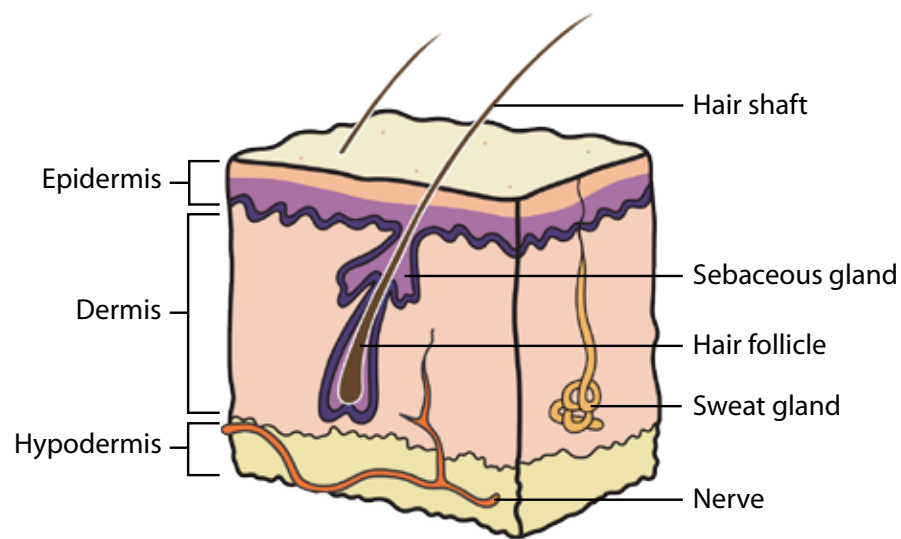
see your doctor about treatment and your prosthetist about possible socket changes that may be needed. However, if you have a vascular- or diabetes-related amputation, it is important to contact your medical team **right away** if you have a sore or infection, as it takes much longer to heal in your situation, and will need special attention to ensure an ulcer does not develop.

What Can Cause Skin Problems?

The cause of skin conditions, such as boils and cysts, may be simple to discover and treat, but sometimes you need perseverance to track down the cause(s). A combination of strategies may be needed to successfully address occasional and even more persistent conditions. As mentioned in our previous article

on stump care and hygiene, **heat** is a main cause of skin problems. Overheating can lead to various problems: perspiration, odour, and stump “pistoning” (moving around within the socket) - which in turn can chafe the skin and cause abrasions.

Bacteria can be a problem for amputees. Skin always has many unseen organisms on its surface, some of which are harmless and some of which, under certain conditions, can cause infection. While skin usually can expel bacteria when perspiration dries by evaporation, drying can't occur in the moist environment of an enclosed socket. On top of that, skin usually has a negative charge which repels bacteria, but an amputee's skin, when bathed in salty solutions (such as perspiration) for long periods, can develop a positive charge which can attract more bacteria than would otherwise be present.



The skin is the body's largest organ and has many complex functions such as; regulating the body's temperature, protecting the body from injury, helping to eliminate/expel harmful substances and acting as an external sensory organ. Each square inch of skin contains up to 650 sweat glands and 65 hair follicles!

Be careful with products you use to reduce bacteria though – extensive use of **alcohol** may cause the skin to become too dry and aggravate skin problems. Another tip is not to shave your residual limb as this may lead to folliculitis – a bacterial infection of the hair follicle.

A change in the type of socket and **suspension** you use can affect the condition of your residual limb. For example, a silicone pin lock system may create a traction pull on the end of the residual limb that you might not be used to at first. Different types of sockets can put different pressures on the residual limb and also provide very different environments and it may take time for your skin to adjust. In some cases, even after an adjustment period, the new type of socket may just not be suitable and you have to consider other options. What works for one amputee is not suitable for all.

There are other causes to skin problems as well. Your **socket** may not fit properly if you have gained weight (causing pressure areas), or if you have lost weight (causing your residual limb to move in your socket too much). You can also develop **allergies** to your socket, liner, sock, or even a product you use on the skin, resulting in irritation. Even long-time users of certain products may suddenly develop allergies to them.

Over the years, amputees have contacted us about various products that have helped them with their skin problems. **We include products we are aware of but this is by no means an exhaustive list. There are other options available that your prosthetist, doctor or pharmacist might suggest.**

Prevention

Moisturizing Lotions and Skin Care Products

Many amputees find regular use of moisturizing lotions or creams helps condition the skin to hold up better against abrasions. Vitamin-based creams and lotions are often used, such as **EDAP** (containing vitamins A, E and D) which is available through your prosthetist. Prosthetists and/or pharmacists may recommend certain off-the-shelf lotions – **Uremol** for dry, itchy skin (containing urea in an emollient cream base), **Professional Care** used in hospitals to prevent itchiness and discomfort due to dry skin, and **ADAPTSKIN** which is a product made by an amputee from his personal experience (www.adaptlabs.com).

Even the liner donning lotion **ProstheCare Easy Donn** (Cascade) contains conditioners and soothing essential oils to help condition the skin. Cleaners and moisturizers are available for those with especially sensitive skin – dermatologists often recommend **Cetaphil** (soaps, cleansers and moisturizers), **Spectro Jel** (skin cleanser) and **Spectro Derm** (moisturizing skin cleanser). Cetaphil and Spectro products are available at drug stores.



Some prosthetic companies have skin care products that are available through your prosthetist. **DERMA Skin Care** (Otto Bock) includes **DERMA clean** (anti-bacterial cleaner for the stump and socket), **DERMA prevent** (protective coating lotion to cover and protect the skin), and **DERMA repair** (anti-bacterial lotion that relieves and repairs irritated skin while moisturizing it). Similarly, **ICEROSS Clean and Simple** (Össur) soap, moisturizing lotion and lubricant spray are pH balanced and 100% fragrance- and dye-free. **ALPS Fitting Lotion with Skin Conditioner** (ALPS) helps to smooth dry, sensitive skin and is hypoallergenic. Centri's **Cleani-Stump** disposable wipers are handy to have on hand.

Some amputees use anti-bacterial cleansers on their stumps to limit bacteria that cause skin problems – ones like **Tersaseptic** and **pHisoderm** are available at drugstores. Anti-bacterial wet cloths (that kill odour-causing bacteria) are also useful to have on hand to quickly clean your residual limb during the day if needed; some contain aloe and vitamin E.

Layer of Protection on the Stump

If you apply a layer of protection on the stump before putting on your socket it can lessen the likelihood of sores or abrasions developing. Some amputees use lotions (available through your prosthetist) like **ALPS Skin Lotion** (ALPS) or **DERMA prevent** (Otto Bock), or a self-adhesive, waterproof pad like **OpSite**, (Smith & Nephew) which cushions and protects. **SuperSkin** (MedLogic) is an easy-to-apply liquid to help with skin breakdowns by

providing a layer of protection. For the prevention and treatment of scars, self-adhesive silicone gel sheets like **Cica Care** (Smith & Nephew) are a good option.

Liners and Sockets

Some gel liners incorporate medical-grade mineral oil or aloe vera in the layer that touches the residual limb, which help to soothe and protect the skin. **ProstheCare Hygiene Clean** spray (Cascade) coats the inside surface of the socket with a fine spray to keep the socket fresh and hygienically clean.

Treatment and Solutions

Perspiration build up can lead to odour problems. **Xzuber**, by JMG Products, can help neutralize odour. **Stay Fresh**, by Special Solutions, is another product to control odour that comes in a spray. Some prosthetists provide **Liquid Body Powder** to their clients. Based on the age-old healing properties of potatoes, it is applied as a creamy lotion but dries to a powder to control chafing and odours while soothing areas of friction. One amputee found it worked well in her myoelectric prosthesis as she was unable to shake other kinds of powder into the socket for fear it would damage electrode function.



Controlling perspiration is a large part of preventing abrasions and reducing odour. **Dehydral** is an anti-perspirant/anti-bacterial cream. Many amputees also find anti-perspirant

roll-ons help control perspiration build-up in sockets. Other products are more natural deodorant crystal stones which are consumer friendly containing no aluminum. (These products are available over-the-counter at drug stores).

Once an abrasion occurs, it is time to consider a medicated lotion. Prosthetic products like **DERMA repair** can be used as well as over-the-counter products available at drug stores which simply differ in their active healing ingredients. Many amputees use aloe vera (available in creams and gels) because of its healing properties. Antibiotic ointments are often used to treat and prevent infections in minor cuts and abrasions – some examples include **Bactroban** (mupirocin), **Polysporin** (polymyxin), and **Ozonol** (bacitracin, lidocaine hydrochloride). Some amputees use triple antibiotic ointment that has zinc oxide as its healing agent. As sockets create moist environments, zinc oxide, which is an ingredient in many baby care products for treating baby rashes, is helpful. Gold Bond medicated powder also has medicated ingredients. A doctor may also prescribe **Betamethafone** which can be found in Lotriderm (0.1%) for persistent or more serious skin conditions.

Second Skin (available at drug and sports stores) products promote healing and protect the skin through a combination of medicated gel and adhesive bandage. Tip: Normally it is painful to pull off the adhesive bandage that covers the gel, but soaking it under water loosens the adhesive, making it painless to remove.

If you are considering products at your drugstore, bear in mind that a lightly medicated powder or lotion (such as zinc oxide as mentioned above) can help treat minor skin irritations; an antihistamine cream can help treat a pink rash over the stump (a rash that is not from weight bearing) and an antibiotic cream can help treat actual abrasions.

Skin Disorders Affecting Amputees

No matter how hard you try to prevent them, sores and abrasions can occur. If you experience any of these conditions you should consult with your doctor. The following are some common problems that you may face:

- **Rashes and Abrasions** – these are the most common skin disorders which may occur intermittently or even frequently.
- **Edema** – characterized by skin swelling, drying and roughening at the end of the stump, can be prevented by gradual compression using an elastic bandage. Although this may seem like a minor condition at first, it can develop into a serious complication.
- **Contact Dermatitis** – this is caused by an irritant, whether in the materials of the socket, or



from an outside source, such as a cleaning agent, powder, lubricant or ointment used in amputee care. Once the cause is discovered and treated, the problem usually disappears.

- **Cysts** – they commonly plague above-knee amputees, occurring on the inside of the leg along the upper edge of the artificial limb, but below-knee amputees can experience them as well. They start as small bumps, or nodules which vanish when the artificial limb is temporarily removed, but the constant rubbing of the artificial limb can make the problem worse as cysts become larger and more numerous. Cysts can become infected and cause further damage.
- **Folliculitis** – a bacterial infection of the hair follicle which produces small, itching, solid areas. If left untreated, these may later develop into boils in which deep-red, painful nodules rise to the surface of the skin. Anti-bacterial soaps may cut down on the bacteria which cause these conditions.

- **Fungal Infections** – also caused by the moist, warm conditions in the socket of an artificial limb, these require special creams or powders, which can eventually clear up the condition.

- **Eczema** – dry, scaly skin which becomes moist for no discernable reason. A cause needs to be established or the condition will recur. Allergies, or secondary conditions following edema can contribute to the condition.

- **Adherent scars** – when there has been repeated infection or ulceration damage to the skin, scar formation may be so intense that scar tissue may become attached to the underlying layers of skin. Surgical revision to free the scar is often necessary if the situation becomes very problematic.

- **Ulcers** – these sores come from bacterial infections, or from circulation problems. They may become chronic if not diagnosed and treated immediately.

While you will need to use certain products and see your doctor for treatment if a skin disorder becomes persistent, cleaning your stump and socket/liner daily is the best method to prevent problems from occurring in the first place.

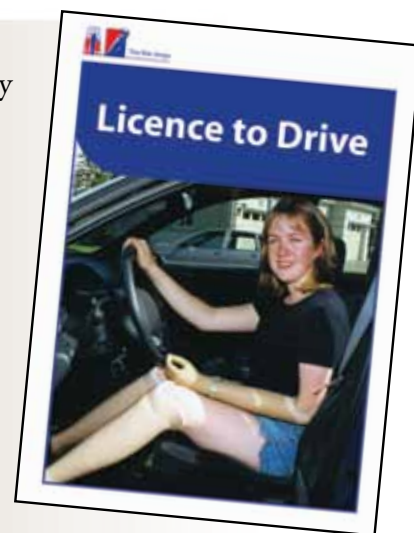


For a free copy of the article **Back to the Basics – Keeping the Stump Clean and Healthy** from *Living With Amputation No. 2*, or more information on skin care, please contact us toll-free at **1 877 622-2472** or e-mail nac@waramps.ca. ■

FEATURE RESOURCE

Driving is an important means to independence, enabling you to carry out daily living tasks outside the home as well as take part in social activities without having to rely on others for transportation.

Whether you are an already licensed driver who has recently become an amputee, or an amputee going for your driver's licence for the first time, the information contained in *Licence to Drive* applies to you. Will you need special devices on your vehicle, or special driver training? What will obtaining or renewing your driver's licence entail? Will you have any restrictions on your licence? *Licence to Drive* answers the most frequently asked questions regarding amputation and driving in Canada, and provides a list of provincial and territorial ministries of transportation and modification centres we are aware of in all regions of the country.



To obtain a free copy of this booklet, call toll-free **1 877 622-2472** or e-mail nac@waramps.ca, or read and/or print the booklet on-line at waramps.ca – using the search engine key word “driving.”

COMFORT IN THE BATHROOM

Ideas to make your bathroom safe and user friendly...

There are many daily living aids available to assist amputees with all their bathing needs. Arm amputees may need assistance squeezing out the toothpaste or may find it difficult to wash hard-to-reach places in the shower. For leg amputees stability may be an issue – shower and swim legs may be worn in the shower but standard fittings will rust if they get wet so be certain to ask your prosthetist if your prosthesis can be worn in the shower. As part of our ongoing series of articles, in this issue we feature aids to assist you in the bathroom.

In the Bathtub and/or Shower

Bath seats and boards allow you to take a shower while seated. Handheld showers can be attached to the shower head or facet and can be positioned within your reach. Grab bars can be attached to the side of the tub and throughout the bathroom to help you safely get in and out of the tub. There are also specialized baths and showers that you can have installed in your home – walk-in tubs or trackless shower doors make accessibility easier for those with reduced mobility or wheelchair users. Sponged mitts and angled sponges help to wash those hard-to-reach places.



Accessories

There are many accessories to help you squeeze out toothpaste, dry your hair or trim and clean your nails!



Toileting Aids

Raised toilet seats and hinged arm supports can be helpful if it is difficult for you to sit down or get up from a regular height toilet. Toilet aids (reachers) can help with personal hygiene. There are also shower toilet seats or bidets that have washing and drying features with control panels which provide independence in the bathroom for amputees with multiple amputations or limited upper limb function.



Location...

To find stores that sell daily living aids, look in your local Yellow Pages under these sections: *Home Health Services and Supplies, Medical Supplies, Surgical Supplies or Appliances.*

Just a few resources (retailers who provide daily living aids and bathroom products):

Sammons Preston Canada, Inc.
Toll-free **1 800 665-9200**,
pattersonmedical.ca

Freedom Living Devices
Toll-free **1 866 699-9300**,
freedomlivingdevices.com

Barrier Free Architecturals Inc.
Tel: **1 877 717-7027**,
barrierfree.org

Clark Medical Products Inc.
Toll-free **1 800 889-5295**,
clarkmedical.com ■